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August 22, 2008

USAID Monthly Newsletter

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Regional news



The USAID-funded program taught children and their mothers healthy behaviors to prevent illness. Photo: Project HOPE



USAID helped auctions to increase farmer access to land and improve transparency of land distribution. Photo: Chemonics



The USAID-supported improvements will help businesses operate in a more supportive environment. Photo: USAID

Health Program Reached Over 1 Million Central Asians

The USAID-funded Healthy Family program reached over 1.1 million women and small children in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan from 2002-2008. The program trained over 13,000 health providers in international guidelines and protocols for improved service delivery and worked with communities to educate them on health issues. Additionally, the USAID-funded program helped formulate national health policy in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The program was implemented by a consortium led by Project HOPE.

Land Reform Project Improves Land Markets in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

USAID's land reform project has reached over 300,000 beneficiaries through legal advice and support, improved knowledge of land rights, and public hearings on land issues. In Kyrgyzstan, the project helped design, pilot, and replicate a more effective and transparent use of the state-owned Land Reform Fund that contains 25% of the country's agricultural land. The project helped 130 rural municipalities plan the use of the fund's land and auction some of it for lease. These actions increased farmer access to land and earned over \$210,000 for the municipalities, increasing their budgets by 327%. To support the process, the Kyrgyz Government will finance the inventory of the fund's lands, which is the first step in planning the land use. The USAID project also helped solve some 55,000 land disputes. In Tajikistan, where all land is owned by the state, local governments control farmer activities, and farmers are heavily indebted, the USAID project focused on strengthening land use rights. With project support, farmer developed better knowledge of land rights and solved nearly 11,000 land disputes, including \$620,000 of fraudulently imposed farm debts on 62 farms. The project also helped develop key legislation for more market-oriented land transactions and investments.

USAID Helps Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan Significantly Improve Business Environment

Based on the recommendations by the USAID Business Environment Improvement project, the Governments of



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Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have recently changed a number of laws and regulations that will simplify starting and operating a business. These improvements are expected to boost the countries' rating in the World Bank's Doing Business ranking. Kazakhstan has reduced the number of days needed to obtain a permission for construction by 35% (from 231 to 150) and the costs by 97% (from 10.7 million to 310,000 Kazakh tenge). In Kyrgyzstan, simplified construction procedures will save 154 days and \$680 in fees for each entrepreneur, and streamlined business startup procedures will save 11 days with an estimated annual impact of over \$876,000 for an average of 5,500 business. The country has also improved investor protection and made it easier to receive credit. Tajikistan reduced the minimum charter capital for registering a new business from 400% to 18.69% of average annual income. Additionally, a border crossing between Tajikistan and China began continuous, 210 day a year operations allowing increased transit and trade with China and estimated \$18 million in annual economic benefits for the country.



FINCA wholesale loans help microfinancial institutions reach the groups of population that needs the credits most. Photo: USAID

A USAID-supported Wholesale Lender Marks its 5th Anniversary

This year the USAID-supported micro-credit organization Frontiers celebrates the 5th anniversary in Central Asia. USAID established Frontiers in 2003 to provide wholesale loans to the region's microfinance organizations. Frontiers is now a sustainable organization with a credit portfolio of \$10.3 million and over 50 active clients - microfinancial organizations. Its wholesale loans provide critical funding to credit unions and micro finance organizations that often have no credit history but are in dire need of funding. Frontiers loans allow these organizations to grow and provide financing for small and micro entrepreneurs in the rural and remote regions across Central Asia.



Computer skills help find jobs, start businesses, and improve the on-the-job performance. Photo: IREX

Internet Centers Are Transferred to Local Partners in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan

This summer, the USAID and IREX Internet Access and Training project (IATP) transferred its internet centers in Kazakhstan (two centers) and Kyrgyzstan (six centers) to local organizations which will operate them on sustainable basis. This marks the end of over 12 years of the State Department- and USAID-funded internet access programs in those countries. In addition to those graduations, two centers in Tajikistan will be financed by the project's local partner organizations. IATP centers are hosted by partner organizations, such as libraries, universities, NGOs, and other similar institutions, which share operational costs with IATP until they are ready to self-sustain costs and services.



Dairy GDA helps Kazakh farmers improve productivity. Photo: Winrock

Kazakhstan

Dairy Project Brings More Milk

USAID's GDA "Sustainable Dairy Project" has produced a 20%-40% increase in milk production and a 70%-80% reduction in feed costs through the introduction of rotational grazing and innovative herd management techniques in pilot



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farms. Such results were introduced during the field days at the project's demonstration farms near Almaty and Ust-Kamenogorsk to over 100 gathered farmers, agribusiness leaders, and other key stakeholders. Attendees also learned how this USAID project is an excellent example of private-public partnership efforts creating opportunities and improving the quality of life for citizens throughout Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstan



Some 200,000 students have taken the USAID-supported test to compete for university scholarships since 2002. Photo: CEATM

National Scholarship Test Gives Fair and Equal Opportunity for University Education

Last month, 52 high-school graduates received special recognition from the Government of Kyrgyzstan for achieving the highest scores in the USAID-supported National Scholarship Test. This year, 34,000 eleventh-graders participated in the test at one of 89 testing centers throughout the country to compete in a transparent and fair way for one of the 5,700 university scholarships provided by the Government. Over 65% of test-takers and 71% of students who won government scholarships were from rural areas. Since USAID began support for the testing in 2002, nearly 40,000 students have received government scholarships after participating in the exam. Currently, the exam is administered by a local NGO, CEATM, created by USAID to develop and run this test.



Meilikan Anarbaeva (left) says CDI helped her start a bakery. Photo: Mercy Corps

Southern Kyrgyzstan Communities Boost Employment and Improve Infrastructure

Three years since the launch of USAID and Mercy Corps' Collaborative Development Initiative (CDI) in southern Kyrgyzstan, it has implemented nearly 190 initiatives and achieved high popularity among local communities. A recent evaluation found that 60% of all beneficiaries noted an average of 20% increase in their profits since they started working with CDI. Over 90% of the beneficiaries who received marketing assistance have since developed new linkages with stakeholders and boosted production volumes, while of those that received business training, 40% have introduced better business practices. The survey also showed that 90% of the youth for whom CDI arranged apprenticeships have found full-time employment close to their homes. Vast majority of the beneficiaries expressed their appreciation to Mercy Corps and USAID for having responded to their needs, for the genuine concern showed towards them, and noted that this project also different from many others for its transparent and ethical approach.



A participant of a Community Connections study tour with his American colleague. Photo: Community Connections

Community Connections Alumni Serve as Change Catalysts

Almost 100 Kyrgyz from various public, non-governmental, religious, medical, and business organizations participated in the USAID Community Connections program since its



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launch in 2006. Recently, the program organized two workshops for the alumni to share achievements and experiences since their study tours in the U.S. Svetkul Akmatova, president of a 500-strong handicraft cooperative in Naryn Oblast, established a marketing center for the cooperative's products, published a manual on the Kyrgyz crafts, and organized craft fairs in Kyrgyzstan and abroad. Gulmira Temirbekova from the Center for Civic Initiative Development in Talas has engaged local government, other NGOs, and businesses to create employment opportunities. Yet another participant, Mahmud Abyljanov from Naryn Oblast, bought computer equipment and opened a madrassa for 40 young men and women. Yusur Loma, Advisor of the Kyrgyzstani Muslims Mufti developed a regional training curriculum on HIV/AIDS prevention for the Spiritual Committee of Kyrgyzstani Muslims. Kanatbek Myrzahalilov is working on improving legislation related to religious organizations. Shortly after his study tour he became the Deputy Director on Kyrgyz Republic State Agency for Religious Affairs and credits the USAID program for this career success.

Tajikistan



Representatives of local government and USAID officially open the clinic. Photo: USAID

One More Center of Excellence to Foster Family Medicine in Tajikistan

In July USAID Regional Director Bill Frej opened the Instravshan Center of Excellence in Family Medicine, organized by the USAID ZdravPlus project. The center will provide family-oriented medical services to the population and train family doctors in the Istravshan District. This center joins other similar establishments in Tajikistan that were created with USAID support to help the country transition from the Soviet model of narrowly specialized and cost-intensive medicine to a more patient-oriented evidence-based family medicine approach in which a same practitioner cares for the entire family. This helps the country adopt a more preventive approach to medicine and improve the quality of services to the population.

Turkmenistan



Farmers learn to use and interpret soil tests. Photo: Winrock

USAID Introduces Soil Testing to Improve Harvests

Recently, USAID and Winrock International opened Turkmenistan's first soil test laboratory on the base of a USAID-supported demonstration greenhouse in Gordjou, Ahal Welayat. The laboratory will conduct soil tests to help local farmers better understand soil types and their pH value, and choose fertilizers that provide adequate amounts of nutrients. Soil testing also helps farmers minimize fertilizer spillage into the environment and reduce costs by applying only quantities that plants need. USAID provided 150 pieces of LaMotte Soil Test Kits and 15 pieces of PH meters valued at more than \$20,000 to make soil test activities available for farmers and agribusiness and funded American experts to train farmers in the use of soil testing. By the end of the summer USAID and Winrock will establish four more soil test facilities across the country.



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Uzbekistan



The new TB database will improve the tracking and analysis of TB cases. Photo: CDC

A New Database Will Help Control the Spread of TB

Recently CDC, with funding from USAID, trained a group of Uzbek specialists from TB hospitals to understand and interpret the Uzbek Tuberculosis (TB) Electronic Surveillance Case-based Management System (TB ESCM) database, which currently includes nearly 93,000 TB cases. This is yet another step towards the nationwide implementation of the system that will replace the currently used slow and labor-intensive paper-based TB reporting with comprehensive and efficient electronic reporting. Once implemented in all the country, the database will help doctors and Ministry of Health officials track and analyze features of TB epidemics, compare data with other countries in the region, and prepare more effective control and prevention measures. This system was developed and piloted with USAID support in all five Central Asian

countries. USAID provided the computers, software, and training for the pilot phase of the system's implementation in Uzbekistan. The replication of the system is currently financed by the Global Fund.